A Synopsis

A Study of the Common Grammatical Errors in the Writing Skills of the Secondary School Students from the selected Schools in Latur District

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1) Introduction

Henry Sweet: ‘language is the expression of ideas by means of speech sounds combined into words. Words are combined into sentences, this combination answering to that of Idea into thoughts.’ Main function of the language is to communicate and to transmit the information from one person to another. Hence the human life would be impossible and inconvinceable without the use of language. It is said that,' English is the language on which the sun never sets', Crystal 1988. It is the queen of language and one can say as- passport for employability or the language of world's civilization. It is the leading language of the world referred as global lingua franca as it connects different people from different countries with different culture, language, political and economical issues.

English today has become the language commonly used in every place by everyone. Specially it is used at international level. As British ruled India and gave this gift of language which now plays the important role to connect the people over the entire world. To learn any language one must know about the grammar of the language. It helps the learner to understand and to form the sentences and even to write and to speak effectively.

Importance of Grammar-

'Grammar is the structural foundation of our ability to express ourselves. The more we are aware of how it works, the more we can monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the way and others use language. It can help foster precision, detect ambiguity and exploit the richness of expression available in English. Proper use of grammar in speaking and writing leads to clear communication and understanding.

Grammar error or Grammatical Error -

Grammar error or grammatical error refers to the mistakes in standard grammar. In order to identify grammatical errors one needs to learn the rules of grammar. Common errors are related to word order, parts of speech, misplaced modifiers, consistency such as verb tenses, agreement such as subject verb agreement.

2) Importance of Writing Skills

The four linguistic skills are considered to be the four pillars supporting the magnificent structure of language. During teaching learning process, the teacher aims. At developing the four abilities – ability to listen, to speak, to read and to write. Though the ability to write occupies the last in this order, it does not mean that it is least important. According to Bacon (1851), "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man and writing, an exact man". When such is the case, Golda (2012) opines that mastery over the language can be ensured only when the student does the following tasks successfully:

- Use grammatically structured language.
- Use appropriate and a rich fund of words, phrases and idioms.
- Use a variety of sentence patterns.

  Build a proper sequence of sentences using appropriate connections.
- Use relevant thoughts.

This proves that writing is of immense importance and developing this skill is an important factor in the teaching of a foreign language. Singh (2006) says "The writing exercise has a powerful effect on the child's mind and provides a very good way of fixing vocabulary, spelling and patterns of all kinds". Writing should be given the priority because it helps to remodel the speech and reading patterns in a child's mind and helps in retaining what he has read or understood. Gaudar (1982) has rightly said, "Writing has instrumental value in a school. It is a means of preserving the knowledge which the pupil has gained or the judgments he has formed. It serves as a check on his forgetting useful items of knowledge and idea. The habit of making notes of what is read and of summarizing help in the recollection of what has been studied."

Writing is one of the important ways of expressing one's own thoughts, feelings, communicating ideas and views to others. So, it is considered to be an important part of communication. Often, one is judged by the quality of writing one possesses. To communicate any message with clarity, good writing skills is a must. An ancient proverb avers, 'Tell me, I forget, show me, I remember, involve me I understand'. It is very essential to involve the learners in writing and it should not be forgotten that writing is an art, which is developed over a period of time.

As mentioned in Stoynoff (1997) language plays an important role in higher education context because it is the language proficiency especially the mastery of the

writing skill that determines the academic success and achievement in higher education. Effective writing skill is not only the essential tool for success in higher educational learning but also in work and society. In order to succeed and find their academic path, the students studying at the secondary level should acquire a good level of academic writing and communication. It is of utmost importance both in academic performance and that of the performance at work of an individual as writing is extensively used within education and the workplace. According to Jones (1995) if an individual possesses effective communication and writing skills, he will be able to manage the daily operations, make decisions as well as document and report large amounts of complex information in the workplace.

Ultimately, writing helps us think better, and perhaps even be smarter. Similar to dreams, writing allows us a way to collect our otherwise scattered thoughts and ideas, and channel them into a single beam of information. It opens up a new dimension for the mind to move into and, consequently, creates a space for unparalleled expression and imagination. Problems of the second language learners in writing second language learners have problems with learning the English language in general, but they are very poor in their writing skills. They have several linguistic problems which have a significant effect on their second language acquisition.

Cognitive problems

Second language writing is believed to be cognitively complex. The term "cognitive" refers to the process of information. Cognition denotes more than simply reasonable thought-like processes. It also refers to the various mental processes used in thinking, remembering, perceiving, recognizing, classifying, etc. Indeed, writing is a product of the complex interaction of the linguistic environment and the learner's internal mechanisms.

Psychological problems

The process of writing in an academic environment is problematic for second language learners. Many of the problems in writing are psychological in nature. Writing is a solitary activity and if students are required to write on their own, without the possibility of interaction or the benefit of feedback, it makes the act of writing difficult. Feedback is of utmost important to the writing process with individual attention and sufficient feedback on errors, improvement will not take place. Most of

the time, psychological problems manifest themselves in the first stage of writing i.e. in the pre-writing, when many students are unable to produce and generate ideas for writing a sentence. Academic writing requires conscious effort and practice in composing, developing and analysing ideas. Once learners lose confidence in themselves, they fall prey to a chain of psychological reactions. In order to overcome these problems, teachers who teach writing at any level of education must employ suitable strategies of the different stages of writing, encourage and supply the necessary input to their students.

Linguistics Problems

First language learners have linguistic problems in their second language writing. The first language linguistic knowledge may help to motivate, facilitate second language writing. On the other hand, the process of writing in first language is not equal in the process of writing in second language. But it helps in understanding the particular meaning of a words, sentence of the second language. The second language learners have major linguistic problems in second language writing. The linguistic complexity is more for the learners as their does not help them to immediately understand English.

The studies of Lado 1957 and Richards 1971 classify the learner's errors into two general categories: those which result from mother tongue interference and those which result from within L2 interference system itself. Based on this the common writing problem are classified as follows

- Capitalization problem
- Punctuation problem
- Inexplicitness/Fuzziness
- Poor organization / illogical sequence
- Spelling problem
- Grammatical errors

Difficulties in the different areas of writing skills

Just as it is important for an individual to express oneself in spoken language and able to read a written piece, it is important to express oneself in writing. This is especially true as most of the assessment in schools depend on written expression. Writing is both a skill and a means of self-expression. During the writing process

there is a complete integration of visual, motor and conceptual abilities. The three sub-skills of written expression are

(a) Handwriting

(b) Spelling

(c) Composition

Effective writers show proficiency in all the three areas. Difficulties in each area are discussed in the following section.

Difficulties in the handwriting skills

The main objective of instruction in handwriting is legibility. There are several factors that contribute to handwriting difficulties like motor problems, poor instruction, poor motivation, mother tongue influence.

Difficulties in spelling skills

The second sub skill of writing is spelling. It is the formation of words through the traditional arrangement of letters. There is just one correct way to spell a word. But the inconsistent relationships between phonemes and graphemes in English language creates problem for the speller. Poor spellers are found having difficulty with phonological processing skills. It is observed that some poor spellers lack phonetic word attack skills. When spelling a new word, children have to be able to segment the word into its sounds before they can attach the appropriate letters and when reading an unfamiliar word, they have to be able to decode the printed letters back to sounds. Some students who make mistakes in reading are seen making similar mistakes in spelling too. In order to spell well one must be able to reproduce the correct letter by letter sequence of words. When the students are not aware of the spelling rules or when they get confused, they are prone to make spelling mistakes.

Difficulties in composition/written expression skills

Written expression is the highest form of communication and it exhibits how an individual successfully integrates all aspects of writing. This area requires complex thought processes. To be good at written expression, the individual should have ample exposure and experience in reading spelling and verbal expression. Difficulty is seen in generation of ideas, organization, theme development and grammar reasons for poor performance in English Writing skills. The ability to write well is not a naturally

acquired skill; it is usually learned. It must be practiced and learned through experience. This means that, taking time over writing and practicing to write are absolutely essential part of writing. Learners fail to appreciate writing as a skill, i.e., how to be a skillful writer or how to write a correct paragraph /essay. They write the way they speak. Thus, learners really face many problems in expressing themselves systematically and logically, either in the mother tongue or foreign language. Accordingly, the following points focus on the factors that hinder the learner to write correctly.

- Lack of motivation
- Influence of First Language on Writing in English
- Time allotted for writing in class room
- Inappropriate approaches used in teaching writing
- Lack of effective and timely feedback from the teacher
- Teachers lack knowledge about selective correction and correction symbols
- Lack of use of technology for teaching writing

The Role of the Teacher in Writing Lessons

Harmer (2004) discussed five tasks a teacher can do before, during and after student writing. They are:

1) Demonstrating: students should be aware of writing conferences and genre restraints in specific kinds of writing. Therefore, teachers have to be able to put these features into their consideration.
2) Motivating: teachers should inspire, assist and incite students to dig up ideas, create enthusiasm among them with the value of the task and convince them what fun it can be.
3) Supporting: teachers need to be helpful in writing lessons and help students to conquer difficulties that students face in writing.
4) Responding: teachers should respond to the content and construction of a piece of writing supportively and make propositions for its improvement.
5) Evaluating: when evaluating students` writing, teachers can indicate the positive points, the mistakes that students made and may award grades.

3) Objectives of Study -

- To improve the writing skills of secondary school students.
- To identify the common grammatical errors in English writing of the students.
- To work on the grammatical weaknesses of the students.
- To improve the academic standard or performance of the students.
- To investigate the cause and effect of the grammar errors committed by the students.
- To make the students confident in speaking and writing English.
- To make the students use the language correctly and clearly.

4) Hypothesis -

The present study aims at studying the common grammatical errors in the writing skills of secondary school students.

The root cause of the common grammatical errors is lack of reading and practice of writing. The ability to write well is not a naturally acquired skill. It is usually learned. One must practice and learn through experience. Hence writing and practicing both are essential part of writing appropriately.

5) Significance of the Study -

Many students make grammatical errors in writing if they don't know about the proper word order, parts of speech, tense or subject verb agreement. So in order to make them proficient in writing skills we should work on this grammatical errors.

Errors occur when students do not use the structure of language correctly. The error show the way students learn the language, so teachers can set the goals of learning and improve their teaching methods. So it's needed to conduct error analysis to understand the type of errors made by the students. It helps the teacher to identify, categories and describe learner's grammatical errors. Error analysis can also indicate the effectiveness of teaching materials and strategies where teachers can modify the material in the syllabus.

Writing is a difficult language skill that enable students to convey their thoughts, knowledge, feelings and emotions. So in order to write grammatically correct, they need to work on grammatical competence and adequate vocabulary. Learners having writing proficiency can master English effectively. Teacher should focus on student’s errors and improve grammatical teaching quality.

6) Status of English in Contemporary India

C. Rajgopalchary said, "we in our anger against British people should not throw away the baby (English language) with bath water (English people)".

English has become the integral part of our school curriculum but still students face problems while writing. The school level is the foundation of all higher education hence the teacher needs to focus on vocabulary of students and the method has to be used to teach the students to master the language. The teacher has to avoid the First language of the students instead he has to use the vocabulary of English effectively.
The study of English language has been a complex phenomenon with many strengths and limitations in India (Tickoo 1996).

English plays the significant role in the syllabus of many Indian states and union territories. English language is used for interaction between states and intrastate. This is the bridge which connects all fields of IT, Research, Biology, Irrigation, Education, Computer. The students are taught English with old traditional methods. The teacher do not follow the right method while teaching. Instead of working on four skills the teacher gives more weightage to the syllabus. The teacher lack the knowledge of phonetics even they need some training.

7) Research Methodology

The aim of the study was to analyse the grammatical errors made by secondary school students in their written work. The study is a combination of quantity and qualitative data. The research design will be a descriptive survey which results in the formation and important principles of knowledge and solutions to significant problems.

The data will be obtained from the oral interactions of the students, from the writing work of the students. The research is design for a descriptive quantitative research to find out the grammatical errors in students writing.

The researcher relies on primary sources - the common errors of the secondary school students writings. The focus of the study is on the methods and the techniques which the teacher has to use while teaching.

Thus this study offers some recommendations to help to reduce the common errors in writing skill. So once they are familiar with grammar rules then they can express their ideas in writing without committing any error.

The teacher can work on avoiding spelling errors, punctuation by giving the students writing work where they can write correct spellings and will use proper punctuation. He can help the students to learn and write with correct spellings by playing word games, grammar games, language games.

8) Sample

This research has highlighted the common grammatical errors of the students in Latur district. The instrument of the research was a writing test of a descriptive text as - Write on 'My Goal in Life'. In collecting the data about students' grammatical errors we can find and identify the kind of errors. The data that was collected from the test was analysed by using error analysis technique which consisted of three steps.

They are - identification, classification and correction of errors.

9) Scope and Limits

The scope of the study refers to the parameters under which the study will be operating. The problem you seek to resolve in fit within certain parameters. My study is about the students of grade 6 to 8 in Private English Schools, Semi English Schools and Government Schools.

The scope of this research is error analysis especially of the grammatical errors in students writing.

A student who learns English is compelled to understand the grammar rules and apply them in writing and speaking. However it is seen that learners of English and second language find it difficult to apply the correct grammatical rules and are prone to make errors.

10) Chapterization

Introduction

English today has become the second most spoken language in the world. Importance of English has redefined social hierarchy in certain countries. Grammar explores language structure and how words and phrases are combined to produce sentences. Many students struggle with writing English. English language is language where a single missing comma can change the meaning. It is important to be aware of common grammatical errors and to practice grammar rules in order to improve language skills.

Chapter 1

Subject verb agreement

Student will make error as the subject and the verb don't match in number and in person. Singular subject takes a singular verb whereas the plural subject takes a plural verb. Learning the rules for subject verb agreement can be difficult at first but within a practice you will find they start to make more sense.

Example - 1) She writes everyday.

2) They write everyday.

Sentence Fragments

Fragments occur is when the meaning of a second sentence is based on a previous sentence. It is a sentence that is missing either its subject or its main verb. Some sentence fragments occur as the result of simple typographical errors or omission of words.

Chapter 2

Wrong word usage

People generally confused with the homophones as they sound the same but have different spellings and meanings. English can be weird sometimes. As comedian George Carlin put it, "Flammable... Inflammable... non-flammable. Why are there three of them? Either it means frames or it doesn't!"

Inappropriate use of Tenses

Sentence has to be in the same tense throughout the sentence. Inappropriate shifts in tense occur when the tense of the verb do not match within a body of writing. Verb tense should generally stay the same within sentences and paragraphs.

Chapter 3

Misplaced/Dangling Modifiers

A word, phrase or clause that describes the word, phrase or clause is a modifier. When modifier is wrongly placed then we call it a misplaced or dangling modifier. Because of the separation,

sentences with this error often sound awkward , ridiculous or confusing. Typically modifiers are adjectives and adverbs but they can also be prepositional phrases or even entire clauses.

Comma Splice

A common mistake while attempting to correct a run on sentence is the usage of a comma Splice. It occurs when two or more independent clauses are joined only by comma. There are three ways to fix a comma splice. You can add a conjunction, change the comma to a semicolon or make each independent clause its own sentence.

Spelling Errors

Spellings are first literary concepts which a child knows. Getting them wrong can create complications. English spelling can be tricky, even for English speakers! That's because of English is not 100% phonetic and also because there are so many exceptions.

Conclusion

Thus, the chapters set context of the study and provide a short overview of the common grammatical errors which we find in the writing skills of secondary school students. We all need to brush up on our skills from time to time.

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